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S E C R E T RANGOON 000353

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STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: NLD VIEWS SPDC AS "UNFIT" TO CHAIR ASEAN

REF: A. RANGOON 351

[B](#). RANGOON 345

[C](#). 04 RANGOON 1591

[D](#). SECSTATE 50205

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#). (S) Summary: Two of the National League for Democracy's (NLD) top leaders tell us that: "the SPDC is unfit and unsuitable" to take over the ASEAN chair in 2006; the National Convention will recess o/a April 5; the NLD will host a low-key commemoration of Resistance Day (aka Armed Forces Day) on March 27; and ASSK is in "fine" health. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) DCM and P/E chief met on March 22 with NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe and NLD Secretary U Lwin at the party's Rangoon headquarters to discuss current and upcoming events. Our discussions included the following:

--ASEAN 2006: When asked for party views on attendance by the United States at ASEAN events in 2006-2007, the NLD leaders simply responded that "the SPDC is unfit and unsuitable" to take over the chair of the organization. U Aung Shwe said he had heard "rumors" that the U.S. would not attend, but noted that nothing seemed to convince the "hard-lined" SPDC to change its behavior. "Even ASEAN can't do anything," he said, but added that perhaps ASEAN would take a stand at the upcoming Foreign Ministers meeting in the Philippines (ref D).

--National Convention (NC): The NLD leaders said they had not heard much news about developments at the ongoing Convention, other than the regime's draconian "lock down" procedures for delegates who "can't even leave (the remote NC site) unless they have permission and travel in groups." U Lwin said he understood the proceedings would recess o/a April 5 and not resume until after water festival (which ends on April 17).

--March 27: The NLD leaders said that the party would host on March 27 a very low-key Resistance Day (aka Armed Forces Day) commemoration at headquarters. The party will issue a brief statement, but has "no plans to announce anything new." U Aung Shwe said that members of the ethnic coalition United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) would attend, but said it was uncertain who was leading the group while chairman U Hkun Htun Oo remains in detention; "there is no clear leader of the UNA," said U Lwin.

--NLD arrests: U Aung Shwe said that NLD divisional leader Kyaw Hsan, arrested on March 17, was picked up by authorities just one day after returning from his constituency in Sagaing Division (ref B). However, U Lwin said, the GOB will charge the MP-elect, a retired Lt General, for his son's alleged storage on the family compound of property owned by the pro-regime Democratic Karen Buddhist Association (DKBA). U Lwin added that MP-elect Kyaw Khin, vice chairman of the NLD in Shan State, was arrested on February 25 as part of a round-up of ethnic leaders who had participated in a meeting in Taunggyi (Shan State). However, the NLD leaders pointed out, Kyaw Khin was in Rangoon at the time and had nothing to do with the meeting.

[3](#). (S) On the basis of recent, unsubstantiated rumors that Aung San Suu Kyi is suffering from a serious illness, we inquired if the NLD leaders had any information about her health. U Aung Shwe said, "she's fine, but that is very confidential information," alluding to the extremely low

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profile that ASSK's personal physician has maintained for the past three months, following the regime's tightening of access to her compound (ref C).

Martinez